

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1948 - 1949

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY A, 349TH INFANTRY
(88TH INFANTRY DIVISION) AT THE TOWN OF
BELVEDERE, ITALY, 30 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 1944
(NORTH APENNINES CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY
ATTACKING A SMALL TOWN IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN

First Lieutenant John P. Barker, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The General Situation.....	5
The Company Situation and Plan of Attack.....	7
The Attack on Belvedere.....	9
Analysis and Criticism.....	21
Lessons Learned.....	23
Map A - Italy; Gustav to Gothic Line	
Map B - Allied Advance in Italy to 30 Sept. 1944	
Map C - 88th Infantry Division Situation, 30 Sept. 1944	
Map D - Town of Belvedere, Italy, 30 Sept. - 2 Oct. 1944	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 Operations in Sicily and Italy
(July 1943 to May 1945)
Department of Military Art and Engineering
U. S. Military Academy, West Point, N. Y. 1945
(TIS Library)
- A-2 The Blue Devils in Italy
By John P. Delancy
(Personal possession of the author)
- A-3 349th Infantry History
For period 1 to 3 October 1944 (Draft)
(Personal possession of the author)
- A-4 Fifth Army History, Part 6
U. S. Army, Fifth Army
(TIS Library)
- A-5 Fifth Army History, Part 7
U. S. Army, Fifth Army
(TIS Library)
- A-6 A Brief History
II Corps
(TIS Library)

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY A, 349TH INFANTRY
(88TH INFANTRY DIVISION) AT BELVEDERE, ITALY,
30 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 1944
(NORTH APENNINES CAMPAIGN)

INTRODUCTION

A monograph, according to Funk and Wagnalls New Practical Standard Dictionary, is a "description or systematic exposition of one thing or class of things; a dissertation written in great detail". This monograph concerns the details of the operations of Company A, 349th Infantry, 88th U. S. Infantry Division, at Belvedere, Italy, 30 September - 2 October 1944, during the North Apennines Campaign.

To brief the reader on the events leading up to this action, it will be essential to glance briefly at the preceeding combat experience of the 88th Division.

On 5 March 1944, the Division entered combat for the first time. It saw action north of Naples, in a quiet sector on the extreme left flank of the U. S. Fifth Army, which was then engaged against the German forces holding the Gustav Line. The Allied Armies were making extensive preparations for a renewal of the offensive. (1) It was 11 May 1944, when units of the Fifth Army jumped off in a coordinated attack with these armies through the Gustav Line toward Rome. (2) As was expected, once Rome fell, the Germans fought a delaying action, falling back to the Gothic Line. (3)

(1) A-2, p. 47; (2) A-1, p. 78; (3) A-4, p. 9.

This German defense system consisted of heavily fortified positions extending across Italy through the rugged Apennine Mountains. (See Map A)

The terrain where the 5th Army was to fight in the North Apennines was filled with mile after mile of rugged mountains, running southwards along the west coast and heading inland where they are known as the Central Apennines. The north side of the Northern Apennines joins the Po River Valley. The narrowest point of the range lies between Florence and Bologna, a fifty mile distance, where the mountains pinnacle to over 5,000 feet. It is in this area that the town of Belvedere is located. (4)

The villages situated throughout this region are scattered throughout the valleys and along the main highways. While there is cultivation in the valleys and on the lower hills, the higher mountains are barren and rocky. To the terrain obstacles is added the weather. The rainy season starts in late September, swelling the near-dry mountain streams to boiling rivers. In the irregular terrain of this area, transportation is a problem at best. With the coming of snow, road communications often bog down to a complete standstill. Because of the scarcity of roads crossing the Northern Apennines it would not be difficult for the enemy to block our progress. And, too, each road was a nightmare of twists and turns, with sheer drops on one side and cliffs on the other. (5)

(4) A-5, p. 3,4; (5) A-5, p. 5.

As the reader can easily see, the obstacles to be encountered by the advancing Allied forces, were not entirely of German making. The natural obstacles were as formidable as the man-made ones.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Allied plan following the breaching of the Gothic Line was to trap the German Tenth Army south of the Po. Transfer of German units from the central front to the Rimini Area slowed down the advance of the British 8th Army, but proved beneficial to the U. S. 5th Army. To give immediate help to the British, the 5th Army planned on breaking into the Po Valley at Imola. This was the shortest route, and where enemy defenses were less developed than other courses farther west. It was also hoped that this move would catch the German forces off balance in their troop disposition. (6)

Under Lt. General Mark Clark's 5th Army, II Corps' plan of attack, issued 5 September 1944, called for the converging of the 34th, 85th, and 91st Divisions at the Radicosa Pass, while the 88th Division was to be in reserve. On 20 September this Division was given the task of making the main thrust toward Imola. They were ordered to concentrate around the area of Mt. Atuzzo, and be ready to pass through the right units of the 85th Division the following day. (7) The next ten days showed significant gains, but casualties ran extremely high. The 88th Division suffered greater losses in this time than had any of the other three divisions in the

(6) A-5, p. 89; (7) A-5, p. 90.

II Corps in the three weeks of fighting. (8)

After breaking through the Gothic Line, the forward units of II Corps found themselves well ahead of the flanking IV and XIII Corps. Situated on the right flank of II Corps, the 88th Division was forced to protect its right flank while attacking northward. Quickly seeing the 5th Army objective of Imola, the Germans reinforced their units in this sector. The ensuing battles, particularly the capture of Mt. Battaglia, were bloody affairs. While the enemy forces were unable to recapture Mt. Battaglia, they did succeed in blocking the advance to Imola. This resulted in General Clark shifting the main offensive back to Highway 65. (9) (See Map B)

On 1 October 1944, at 0600 hours, II Corps was to jump off in a coordinated attack with its final objective the Po Valley at Bologna. The objectives which faced these divisions at the onset were enemy defenses situated on dominating terrain features. (10)

The 91st Division, situated just south of Monghidoro would jump off for Loiano. (11) On the right flank of this Division, the 85th Division was to attack along the Idice River Valley. (12) The 34th Division, on the left flank of II Corps, would jump off on its attack of the mountains and high ground between the Sanena and Sambro creek valleys. (13) (See Map B) On the right flank of II Corps, the 88th Division, using only the 349th Infantry and a battalion of the 351st Infantry, was to spearhead the offensive toward Bologna. The entire 350th Infantry,

(8) A5, p. 90; (9) A-5, p. 96-97; (10) A-5, p. 112;

(11) A-5, p. 114; (12) A-5, p. 116; (13) A-5, p. 119.

of this division was employed repulsing ferocious German counter-attacks on the key terrain feature of Mt. Battaglia, while the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 351st Infantry were holding Mt. Cappello. (14) (See Map C)

The regimental objective of the 349th Infantry was to be Sassoleone, on the route to Bologna. On the left flank of the Regiment, the 1st Battalion was given the mission of clearing Belvedere and the high ground to the northeast, while the 3rd Battalion was to take the ridge-line east of the 1st Battalion along Highway 937. The 2nd Battalion was to be held in reserve and prepare to pass through the other two battalions toward Sassoleone. (15) (See Map C)

The enemy forces which faced II Corps at this time were the 334th, 44th, 4th and 362nd German Infantry Divisions. Of these, the division immediately confronting the 88th Division, was the 44th, and elements of the 334th and 362nd German Infantry Divisions. (16) (See Map C) ^{P C}

THE COMPANY SITUATION AND PLAN OF ATTACK

On 29 September 1944, A Company, of the 1st Battalion 349th Infantry, was located on the southeast slope of il Sasso. At 1200 hours on this date, the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Hugh E. Quigley, called all his company commanders together to give them the general situation and plan of attack. Since B Company was at La Corsetta, which was on the line of march to Belvedere, Captain John King, the Company Commander, was to lead the Battalion to his command post. From there A Company

(14) A-5, p. 118; (15) A-5, p. 119; (16) A-5, Map 8, p.108.

would lead the way to the forward assembly area, the march column being A, C, D, and B Companies respectively. The mission of A Company was to attack and occupy Belvedere and the high ground beyond. After the town was taken, C Company was to pass through and attack and hold the hill, Pgio San Giovanni, to the northeast. B Company was then to "leap frog" and take Hill 524 just to the north of C Company's objective. D Company's mission was to support the attack with a platoon of machine guns attached to A Company and one to B Company. The Battalion Commander said word was received from Regiment informing him of a patrol that had recently been in Belvedere and had reported no Germans were to be found there. It was decided that A Company would jump off at 0530 hours, 1 October 1944, for Belvedere with no pre-fire preparations on the town, inasmuch as little resistance was expected. (17)

At 1600 hours 30 September, the Battalion moved out on their march to the forward assembly area southeast of Belvedere. The night was fairly clear, but the trails taken were muddy and slippery. At 0200 hours in the morning of 1 October, the Battalion closed into its forward assembly area. A Company men were ordered to dig slit trenches until the time for attack in 3½ hours. (See Map C) (18)

Lt. LeMasters, the company commander of A Company, ordered the 3rd Platoon to lead the attack. Following would be the 2nd Platoon, A Company's machine guns, 1st Platoon, D Company's machine guns, and lastly the Mortar

(17) Personal Knowledge, Statement of Capt. John J. King, 22 September 1948; (18) Personal Knowledge.

Squad. The line of departure would be the junction of the trail and Highway 6529. (See Map D) Upon entering Belvedere the 2nd Platoon was to swing to the left and come up abreast of the 3rd Platoon, attacking the town simultaneously. The company was up to about 65% of its strength, having lost the remaining personnel during the previous two weeks offensives. However many key non-coms were still present, and morale was high. (19)

Upon reaching the forward assembly area, the men were issued extra ammunition and a two days' supply of K ration. A train of 26 mules had been brought forward by the Battalion S-4, Lt. Robert Duffy, carrying supplies of ammunition, rations, radio batteries, and wire. After receiving their rations, several men started in on their cold breakfasts, while others took the chance to get a few precious hours of sleep before the attack. (20)

The town of Belvedere, approximately three miles south of Sassaleone, the Regimental objective, consisted of about fifteen two-story stone farmhouses. These houses, strung along either side of Highway 6529, were excellent enemy fortifications. Beyond Belvedere the ground rose gradually to several hill masses offering natural defensive terrain to the Germans. Along the road to the northeast of the town there were a few isolated farmhouses leading up to the high ground. (21)
(See Map D)

THE ATTACK ON BELVEDERE

At 0530, 1 October, A Company jumped off on the

- (19) Personal Knowledge; (20) Personal Knowledge; Statement of Lt. R. Duffy, 14 Sept 1948
(21) Personal Knowledge.

attack of Belvedere. As planned, the 3rd Platoon was leading the way along the trail southeast of town. Twenty minutes later they reached the road swinging right into town. As the men of the 3rd Platoon turned onto the road, they came into view of the houses that make up the town of Belvedere. Immediately, an enemy machine gun opened fire upon them. As near as could be determined, the gun was located in a building on the north edge of town. At the initial burst, which caused two casualties, the men deployed, bringing the enemy gun under fire, and edged forward toward the town. The sector of fire from the German gun was directed straight down the main road. No sooner had this machine gun started firing than the Germans laid down heavy defensive fires south of Belvedere, consisting of mortar and light artillery. This concentration of fire landed as far over as the Battalion assembly area. (22)

The 2nd and 1st Platoons had been advancing in squad columns, approximately 10 feet between men, but with the barrage they immediately deployed on either side of the trail. Several minutes later dawn broke, exposing them to the high ground beyond Belvedere, known as Pgio San Giovanni. A second enemy machine gun located on this ground opened fire upon the two platoons and for several minutes raked the trail. The bazooka man of the 2nd Platoon and a rifleman of the 1st were seriously wounded. During a brief lull, these two casualties were pulled into a gully and administered first aid until such time as they could be evacuated back to the

(22) Personal Knowledge.

Battalion Aid Station. The bazooka was passed on to another rifleman to carry.

The Company commander called back to the Battalion C. P. by 300 radio for artillery to be placed on this machine gun beyond Belvedere which was holding down the 2nd and 1st Platoons. The Battalion Commander, at the same time, had seen from his C. P. about ten Germans digging in along a ridge in this general area. Capt. Lester, Artillery Liason Officer, from the 337th Field Artillery, supporting the 349th Infantry, tried to bring this target under fire with his guns. For some reason, perhaps the location of the guns, they were unable to bring any artillery to bear upon the target, so immediately the battalion engaged the enemy with 81 MM mortar fire. (23)

Our mortar fire temporarily silenced the German machine gun enabling the 2nd platoon to proceed as planned. Moving across the main road cautiously, the platoon worked its way up on the left side of town, coming abreast of the 3rd Platoon now located in the first two buildings on the right side of town. The 1st Platoon then moved over behind the 3rd Platoon while the machine gun platoon of D Company was committed across Highway 6529, behind the 2nd Platoon, to protect the company's left flank. The Company C. P. was set up in the cellar of the 2nd house secured by the 3rd Platoon, to the right of the road. This so-called simple tactical maneuver, carried out under intermittent small arms and

(23) Personal Knowledge: Statement of Lt. Col. Hugh E. Quigley, 4 November 1948.

mortar fire, required two and a half hours to complete.

(24)

The Company Commander gave orders to the 3rd Platoon to continue its attack on the right side of the road and move up to take the building on the far end of town where the 1st machine gun was located. The 3rd Platoon leader, Sgt. Mrozinski, attempted to move one squad at a time around the right side of town, but at each endeavor, the 2nd machine gun upon the hill beyond Belvedere opened fire. Aside from the buildings, there was no other cover, for the ground ran down away from town in barren slopes. Two hundred yards on the right side the ground dipped down to a deep draw, while on the left, it sloped gradually away for nearly 800 yards. This made any movement on either side of town visible to the enemy.

Although receiving two casualties from small arms fire, Sgt Mrozinski succeeded in moving one squad to a building near the north edge of town in hopes of knocking out the machine gun. It was then discovered that this gun had been withdrawn to a house about 150 yards beyond the edge of town. (See Map D..house "a") The squad then engaged the gun in action, receiving two more casualties. It was temporarily unsuccessful in its attempt to move forward because of the clear fields of fire the enemy had. The platoon leader returned to the Company C. P. to report the location of the gun and its inaccessibility from where the 3rd Platoon was situated.

(25)

The platoon leader of the 2nd Platoon, the writer.

(24) Personal Knowledge; (25) Personal Knowledge.

of this monograph, was called to the C. P. and given orders to move out on the left side of town, advancing as far as possible, with the mission of silencing the machine gun now holding down the 3rd Platoon. Moving out from the back of the houses then occupied on the left, the 2nd Platoon was out of fire from the enemy gun as long as they kept close to the buildings. A squad at a time moved forward while the other two gave covering fire. It took nearly a half an hour to get the platoon to the last building, a school-house. At this time it was decided to leave two squads behind the stone fence at the far edge of the school-yard, while the 1st squad moved forward behind a hedgerow.

Not up to full strength, as previously stated, the squad consisted of seven men and the platoon leader. One at a time the men inched forward, crawling along on their stomachs, with the man behind covering. They continued unnoticed in this manner behind the hedgerow for nearly 100 yards, until the lead rifleman was about 50 yards from the objective. During this interval, the machine gun was spasmodically engaged with the men of the 3rd Platoon back in the last house on the right side of town, thus keeping the enemy's attention away from the advancing squad from the 2nd Platoon. The lead scout, P.F.C. Webb, raised his head to locate the machine gun and found it firing from a basement window, almost flush with the ground.

Due to the fact that the houses in Italy are built almost entirely of stone, it was found that anti-tank grenades were excellent against German gun placements

in these buildings. For this reason, most riflemen in the company carried two or three of them on their persons, thereby giving their M-1 rifles an extra punch. Not knowing what odds he was against, Webb chose to use one of these, instead of merely rifle fire. Firing just one round, the gun was immediately silenced. (26)

The Platoon Leader then sent a runner back to the school-yard fence to bring forward the 2nd Squad. Moving up cautiously, they came abreast of the 1st Squad where they deployed, each man taking advantage of any irregularity in the surface of the terrain. Under protective cover of the two squads, three men were sent across the street to assault the house. Entering, they took seven German prisoners, one of whom had been seriously wounded by the anti-tank grenade. The prisoners were later identified by the Battalion S-2 as members of a so-called Stalingrad Division. Identification was made from their shoulder straps. (27) Now about 1400 hours, the runner was sent back to the company C. P. with orders to inform Lt. LeMasters of this latest action and ask for the Forward Observer with a radio. He also was to inform the company commander that the 2nd Platoon was preparing to advance on the next house. (28)

Upon the arrival of the Forward Observer, the Battalion Commander was requested, by radio, to place mortar fire on the 2nd Platoon's next objective, an enemy-held house directly up front 100 yards. (See Map D..house "b") This stone building of two stories was

(26) Personal Knowledge; (27) Personal knowledge, Statement of Capt. Robert Meyer, 12 November 1948; (28) Personal Knowledge.

near the crest of a gradual incline. While Mortar fire was being placed on this house, a direct hit was made by a German Self Propelled gun, location unknown, on the command group of the 2nd Platoon. This hit knocked out the radio and critically wounded the F. O. radio operator and a rifleman. It was customary for the officers of the company to carry a (suertte) of morphine taped inside their helmet liners to be used on a casualty only in the event a medic was unavailable, in which case the wounded were properly tagged. At this time the Platoon Medic was evacuating a litter case so the Platoon Leader administered first aid and gave the morphine to both badly wounded men.

Evacuation of the wounded from Belvedere to the Battalion Aid Station, located in a house adjoining the Battalion C. P., was at all times extremely difficult. The enemy had excellent observation on several sections of the route of communication. However, the medics and litterbearers worked tirelessly to keep the wounded moving back to the aid station. (29)

The 3rd squad of the 2nd Platoon was then brought forward, and the B.A.R. man and riflemen were moved into such a position as to bring fire on the objective. Under this covering the 1st and 2nd squads crawled toward the house, thus avoiding the enemy machine gun hastily dug in on the far left side of the building. Carefully maneuvering the men, the two squad leaders led them to within 50 feet of the house. By this time it was about 1500 hours. On a given signal, the reserve

(29) Personal Knowledge.

squad's fire was lifted, and the two squads assaulted the house. The enemy machine gunner, a medic, and one rifleman were taken prisoner, while another was killed in the assault. The machine gunner, wounded in the stomach, later died. During this attack, the platoon suffered two casualties. Because the platoon medic was back caring for our other wounded men, the German medic was promptly pressed into service. His first aid kit was well equipped and he was able to properly care for our wounded.

The 2nd Platoon was then hastily deployed and given orders to dig in on either side of the new position, face north, and prepare for a counter-attack. The remnants of the entire three squads, numbering eighteen men, were now on line.

While the 2nd Platoon was engaged capturing the German position, the Company Commander had become a casualty and been evacuated back to the Battalion Aid Station. Lt. Carter, Executive Officer, was given command of the company by the Battalion Commander, who notified Carter that C Company had been committed to the right of A Company to head for its objective, the hill, Pgio San Giovonni. (30)

Lt. Carter decided to have the 1st Platoon move out passing through the 2nd, and take the next group of houses. The two light machine guns, from the 4th Platoon were set up in the second floor windows of the Company C. P., now located in a house on the north end

(30) Personal Knowledge.

of town, to cover the 1st Platoon. Accompanying this platoon, the company commander moved out and passed through the 2nd Platoon. Moving cautiously, they advanced almost 200 yards out front to their objective, which was a large farmhouse. (See Map D..house "c") Encountering no enemy fire, the house was quickly reached and searched. While making preparations to move on to the next house, the 1st Platoon was fired upon from the vicinity of a house 100 yards to the northwest. (See Map D..house "d") During the ensuing fire fight, the company commander, the platoon sergeant, the only other remaining sergeant, and two riflemen, were wounded by machine pistol fire. This left the 1st Platoon without a non-commissioned officer, as a fight a few days previous had depleted its N.C.O. rank down to the two sergeants now wounded. (31)

After a hastily organized defense, the walking wounded were evacuated. Orders were given to hold the ground taken and await reinforcements, and stretcher bearers to remove the litter case. The Company Commander, being able to walk, returned with the wounded to the company C. P. where he notified the Battalion Commander, by radio, of the prevailing situation. Lt. Emerson from C Company was ordered to take over command of A Company. He gave the new company commander orders to reinforce the 1st Platoon which was in the most forward position, and hold this ground. Lt. Emerson ordered Sgt. Mrozinski to hold the position at all cost.

The sergeant moved the remainder of his 3rd Platoon,

(31) Personal Knowledge.

with four men from the weapons platoon, and two litter bearers from the Battalion Aid Station, to the 1st Platoon's position. Darkness was beginning to fall as the men arrived there. While starting to get into defensive positions and prepare to evacuate the wounded, they were attacked. The Germans laid down a heavy artillery concentration on the company area in coordination with their attack on our forward position. At the outset of the attack, the enemy small arms were within range of 100 yards of our forces, from where they advanced in a frontal and right flanking movement. Using every available weapon, our men fought gallantly against overwhelming odds. So weakened in numbers by the fighting of the two previous weeks and this attack on Belvedere, the combined forces of the 1st and 3rd Platoons at the besieged position, only equaled twenty-four men. The enemy forces numbered approximately a full company.

With ammunition dangerously low, and six men casualties, they were receiving fire from an enemy close enough to throw hand grenades in the windows. Shortly after, they were captured by the Germans. (32)

As soon as the Battalion Commander learned of the loss of these troops, he gave orders to B Company's Commander, Capt. John King, to attack Pgio San Giovonni. C Company had been unable to capture the hill. B Company jumped off for the objective at 2100 hours attacking Pgio San Giovonni from the right flank. (33)

(32) Personal Knowledge, Statement of T/Sgt. Mrozinski, 5 October 1948. (33) Personal Knowledge, Statement of Major R. E. Richards, 23 September 1948.

With the loss of the forward elements, A Company now consisted of the 2nd Platoon, the remainder of the 4th Platoon, the Machine Gun Platoon from D Company, and Company Headquarters. All these forces totaled about fifty men. To these were added fifteen new replacements.

At this point the Company Commander and the other remaining officer reorganized the company. The two machine guns from D Company were placed on the right of the 2nd Platoon's forward position, while the one remaining gun from A Company was placed at the left. The mortars were placed several hundred yards to the rear. All the men immediately dug into firing positions and prepared to hold the ground. (See Map..house "b") Due to the stiff fighting which had continued throughout the day, and heavy mortar and artillery fire which still fell intermittently, the men needed no encouragement to dig in. During this reorganization ammunition was sent forward from Battalion and distributed. Ammunition abandoned by the wounded men was also collected and distributed. Squads were then reformed and privates assigned to lead them. The whole reorganization of the company took until 2400 hours the night of 1-2 October. (34)

Two hours later earth-shaking heavy artillery shells began falling on the company area. The shells, 240 MM with delayed action fuses, churned up the ground and shook the houses on their foundations. For all the havoc wrought, casualties were amazingly light. Three men were wounded, and two of D Company's machine guns (34) Personal Knowledge.

were wiped out. Under the tension of this terrible barrage, the men displayed great courage, and a grim determination to hold this ground for which they had paid most dearly. Nerves were on edge, at each moment the fires were expected to lift and reveal a heavy German counter-attack.

While a brief fire fight occurred on the left flank of A Company, the expected enemy counter-attack never got the opportunity to materialize. By dawn, after a long, harrowing night, A Company's seizure of Belvedere was assured. (35)

At 0300 hours, word was received at the Company C. P. that B Company had secured its objective, Pgio San Giovonni. A Platoon from that company was then moved over to attack and occupy the buildings to the north of Belvedere previously held by the captured troop from A Company. C Company was, at this time, committed to the left of B Company, and together they captured and secured Hill 524. Thereby, the Battalion mission of the capture of Belvedere, and the high ground beyond, was completed. (36)

The following two days provided the battalion with a brief rest before another jump off toward another objective on the offensive to the Po Valley.

In summing up the losses of A Company during the capture of Belvedere, there were approximately 54 casualties. Twenty four of the total number were captured,

(35) Personal Knowledge; (36) Personal Knowledge,
Statement of Captain John J. King, 22 September 1948.

and of these, five were wounded. Two of the three original officers who went into this action were casualties. The enemy casualties received at the hands of A Company were 4 killed and 10 captured, of these captured, 2 were wounded.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Although a patrol from the 85th Division reported no Germans in the town of Belvedere, A Company was met with stiff resistance in house-to house fighting. Upon inspection of the enemy gun positions, it was easy to ascertain by the hastily dug implacements that the Germans had occupied the town only a few short hours before our troops entered. Had the Battalion Commander been aware of the presence of enemy forces, he would probably have ordered a heavy artillery concentration to be laid down on Belvedere and the high ground beyond prior to A Company's entry. Possibly this would have neutralized a few of the German gun positions and made the company's initial attack less costly.

In view of the fact that the 337th Field Artillery had not registered on Belvedere, we were only able to use our 81 MM Mortars. Had the artillery been prepared they would have been able to assist us when help was needed.

Because of the narrow approach and the surrounding terrain, I believe the decision to use a single company, with the platoons "leap-frogging" each other, proved to be the best, and possibly the only, way Belvedere could be taken. The very few ground irregularities and the stone farmhouses were the only places where the enemy

didnot have excellent observation.

The Company Commander's decision to personally lead the attack of the 1st Platoon on an enemy position could have jepordized the company, and possibly would not be considered sound judgement in commanding a company. However, in combat it is often necessary for officers and key non-coms to do this.

207
155
100
200
The "300" radio again proved itself to be the finest radio equipment in the company. The "536" radio, normally used by platoons, I have purposely not mentioned in this action because in this mountainous terrain it had been discovered, time and time again, not to be an adequate means of communication, seeming to fail when most needed. The Platoon Leaders and Company Commander relied solely upon messengers. This type of communication proved to be the most reliable and thus was used successfully in this operation.

The capture of the A Company men would possibly not have occurred had they moved into good defensive positions immediately, instead of bunching up in and near the building, thereby making themselves vulnerable to counter-attack. The Germans, quickly realizing this, seized the initiative and took advantage of the disorganization of our troops.

Of the fifteen replacements received during the Belvedere action, half of these came from rear echelon units, sent to the infantry as a so-called diciplinary action, or because they were inefficent or incapable in their previous positions. Some of these men, however, did prove to be good infantry soldiers, in subsequent action.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Messengers or runners must be carefully picked for their courage and dependability.

2. Officers and enlisted men should be well trained in first aid to enable them to care for casualties in the absence of medical personnel.

3. The infantry has to be prepared to take an objective without the help of the supporting arms.

4. Officers and key non-coms have to expect to personally lead men to the objectives in order to instill in many of the men the courage and tenacity needed to successfully accomplish their mission.

5. During combat, the loss of officers and key enlisted personnel is to be expected and should be planned for. Subordinates must be mentally and physically equipped to take over the next highest position when necessary.

6. The M-1 rifle anti-tank grenade, when placed in the hands of a good rifleman, is a potent and deadly weapon against enemy positions in stone buildings.

7. Immediately following the taking of an objective, a speedy reorganization should be automatic because a position is most vulnerable to a counter-attack at this time.

8. The spirit of aggression must be instilled in both officers and men in order that the objective may be secured quickly and with a minimum of casualties.

9. A steady stream of infantry trained replacements is necessary to efficiently wage offensive warfare.